

Message Text

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SUBJ: THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS

SUMMARY: THE DECISION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT TO POSTPONE UNTIL MARCH FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF EARLY ELECTIONS MAKES IT FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES IMPOSSIBLE TO HOLD ELECTIONS BEFORE JUNE. THE TENACITY OF TURKISH PARTIES IN REFUSING TO COMPROMISE THUS FAVORS SOME FORM OF THE IRMAK CABINET CONTINUING FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, PERHAPS UNTIL ELECTIONS. ECEVIT PROBABLY CANNOT FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND DEMIREL WOULD BE ABLE TO DO SO ONLY IF THERE WERE A NUMBER OF DEFECTIONS FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) AT ITS FEBRUARY CONGRESS. INERTIA SUGGESTS THAT IRMAK'S MAINTAINING THE PRESENT CABINET IS THE MOST LIKELY POSSIBILITY. BUT THERE IS ALSO A SUBSTANTIAL POSSIBILITY THAT HE MIGHT REFORM THE CABINET TO INCLUDE MORE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT. EVEN THOUGH THIS SOLUTION WOULD PROBABLY BE OPPOSED BY ECEVIT, IT MIGHT PERMIT IRMAK A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE WITH SUPPORT FROM BOTH THE "NATIONALIST FRONT" AND THE DP. THE CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT IRMAK GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE
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WOULD PROBABLY ENCOUNTER MOUNTING CRITICISM FROM ECEVIT'S PARTY.

END SUMMARY.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DECIDED BY A ONE-VOTE MARGIN ON JANUARY 23 TO POSTPONE UNTIL MARCH 1975 FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF EARLY ELECTIONS. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE STILL PARLIAMENTARY DEVICES WHICH COULD GET AROUND THIS POSTPONEMENT, MOST POLITICAL CIRCLES NOW BELIEVE THAT FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO HAVE ELECTIONS BEFORE JUNE 1975. THIS RAISES THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT, WHICH RESIGNED AFTER FAILING TO SECURE A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, CAN STAY IN OFFICE FOR SUCH A PROLONGED PERIOD.

2. TURKISH POLITICIANS CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE ROUTE OF LEAST COMPROMISE, A PATH THAT UP TO NOW HAS LED TO STALEMATE. AND THE TENACITY OF THE TURKISH PARTIES IN HOLDING TO THIS COURSE CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. HENCE, THE BETTING IN ANKARA NOW SEEMS TO FAVOR SOME FORM OF IRMAK CABINET CONTINUING FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, PERHAPS UNTIL ELECTIONS.

3. THERE NOW APPEARS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY (RPP) COULD GET ENOUGH SUPPORT TO RECEIVE A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FOR A NEW ECEVIT CABINET IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE RPP'S CHIEF HOPE LIES IN THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE DP AT ITS CONGRESS AT THE START OF FEBRUARY WOULD DECIDE TO BACK A COALITION WITH THE RPP TO HOLD SPRING ELECTIONS. PROBABLE DEFECTIONS FROM THE DP IN THIS EVENT MAKE IT QUESTIONABLE THAT THE RPP WOULD SECURE THE NECESSARY MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT. MOREOVER, THE DECISION ANNOUNCED BY FORMER PRESIDENT CELAL BAYAR AT A MEETING WITH HIS SUPPORTERS ON JANUARY 24 TO HOLD HIS FOLLOWERS ALOOF FROM ANY PARTY FOR THE PRESENT ALSO DIMINISHES THE IMPETUS FOR THE DP TO MAKE SUCH A MAJOR POLICY CHANGE. RPP CIRCLES HAD HOPED THAT THE EAGERNESS OF THESE FORMER POLITICIANS TO RETURN TO POLITICAL LIFE WOULD LEAD THEM TO PRESS THE DP TO JOIN IN A MOVE FOR SPRING ELECTIONS.

4. JUSTICE PARTY (JP) LEADER DEMIREL, FOR HIS PART, IS NOT EAGER TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT AT THE HEAD OF A COALITION BACKED BY A BARE MAJORITY. HE IS KNOWN TO FEEL THAT A GOVERNMENT MUST HAVE ABOUT 250 VOTES IN ORDER TO RULE COMFORTABLY. THIS NUMBER WOULD BE POSSIBLE ONLY IF A JP-RPP COALITION COULD BE FORMED OR IF THE DP WERE TO JOIN THE "NATIONALIST FRONT" EN MASSE.

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NEITHER OF THESE ALTERNATIVES APPEARS LIKELY. DEMIREL WOULD, OF COURSE, ACCEPT THE MANDATE EVEN IF HE WERE TO GET ENOUGH DP DEFECTIONS TO GIVE HIM A NARROW VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. THE CHANCES OF THIS DEVELOPMENT WILL BECOME CLEARER AFTER THE DP CONGRESS.

5. IF IRMAK SHOULD STAY ON AS PRIME MINISTER IN THIS SITUATION AS THE LESSER OF EVILS, INERTIA WOULD DICTATE MAINTAINING THE PRESENT CABINET AS THE MOST LIKELY POSSIBILITY. YET IN VIEW OF

CONSIDERABLE SENTIMENT IN POLITICAL CIRCLES IN FAVOR OF INCLUDING MORE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT, THERE IS ALSO A SUBSTANTIAL POSSIBILITY THAT IRMAK MIGHT REFORM THE CABINET IN ORDER TO PERMIT THE GOVERNMENT TO RECEIVE A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. THIS MANEUVER HAS SOMETHING TO RECOMMEND IT TO THE NATIONALIST FRONT PARTIES WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONVINCE THE PRESIDENT GIVE THEM THE NOT TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. THEY, IN EFFECT, HAVE ALREADY BEEN SUPPORTING IRMAK IN PRESENTING THE BUDGET TO PARLIAMENT. AND THEY HAVE BEEN JOINED IN THIS ACTION BY THE DP, WHOSE MAIN DISAGREEMENT WITH THE NATIONALIST FRON HINGES ON ANTIPATHY TO DEMIREL'S LEADERSHIP.

6. THE RPP WOULD PROBABLY BE MORE RELUCTANT TO SUPPORT A REFORMED IRMAK GOVERNMENT. ALREADY THE MORE EXTREME WING OF THE PARTY SEEMS TO BE GIRDING AGAINST IRMAK. YENI ULUS, IN ITS EDITORIAL OF JANUARY 24, CALLED THE PARTY TO PROTEST VIGOROUSLY THE PRESENT IRMAK GOVERNMENT WHICH IT FOUND REMINISCENT OF THE MILITARY-BACKED REGIMES BEFORE THE 1973 ELCTIONS. THE PARTY HAS STEADFASTLY HELD TO THE TACK OF FRUSTRATING EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT IN ALL BUT FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN ORDER TO INCREASE PRESSURE TO HOLD ELECTIONS AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE. WHILE THERE ARE SOME IN THE PARTY WHO WOULD BE WILLING TO COMPROMISE IN LIGHT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE DECISION, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT COMPROMISE WILL WIN THE DAY WITHIN THE RPP. AND ALTHOUGH ECEVIT SEEMS RECONCILED TO HIS INABILITY TO FORCE ELECTIONS FOR THE MOMENT, HE PROBABLY WILL CONTINUT TO CONDITION HIS SUPPORT FOR IRMAK ON A FIRM COMMITMENT FROM THE OTHER PARTIES TO AN ELECTION DATE.

7. WHATEVER THE RPP POSITION, A RECONSTITUTED IRMAK GOVERNMENT COULD RECEIVE A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IF ALL OTHER PARTIES SUPPORTED IT. INDEED, EVEN IF IT RECEIVED A MAJORITY OF THOSE PRESENT IN PARLIAMENT--SOMETHING THAT COULD TAKE PLACE WITHOUT A FORMAL CONFIDENTIAL

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GREEMENT ON DP COOPERATION--ITS STANDING WOULD BE FAR STRONGER THAN THAT OF THE CURRENT CABINET WHICH SECURED ONLY A HANDFUL OF VOTES LAST NOVEMBER. THE CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT IRMAK GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD PROBABLY ENCOUNTER MOUNTING CRITICISM FROM THE RPP WHICH COULD REDUCE ITS SCOPE FOR ACTION.
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